



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
www.ridoe.net

# Elmhurst Elementary School

PORTSMOUTH

## THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

February 6, 2004



### **School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)**

**The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education**

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS  
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**James A. DiPrete, Chairman**

**Jo Eva Gaines, Vice Chair**

**Colleen Callahan, Secretary**

**Frank Caprio**

**Representative Paul W. Crowley**

**Sue P. Duff**

**Senator Hanna M. Gallo**

**Gary E. Grove**

**Patrick A. Guida**

**Mario A. Mancieri**

**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
EDUCATION**

**Peter McWalters, Commissioner**

**The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.**

**For information about SALT, please contact:**

**Rick Richards**

**401-222-4600, x 2194**

**or**

**[salt@ridoe.net](mailto:salt@ridoe.net).**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT .....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>USING THE REPORT.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<b>2. PROFILE OF ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. PORTRAIT OF ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>IMPORTANT THEMATIC FINDINGS IN STUDENT LEARNING .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT: .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>CONCLUSIONS.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PORTSMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<b>7. FINAL ADVICE TO ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>REPORT APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THIS REPORT.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<b>THE ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM .....</b>	<b>24</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **The Purpose and Limits of This Report**

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Elmhurst Elementary School from February 2, 2004 through February 6, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Elmhurst Elementary School?

How well does the teaching at Elmhurst Elementary School affect learning?

How well does Elmhurst Elementary School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Elmhurst Elementary School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

**The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.**

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or [ride0782@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride0782@ride.ri.net) for further information about the *Handbook* or other SALT protocols. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are also available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org).

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

## Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 130 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 26 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

Important enough to include in the report

Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit

Set in the present, and

Contains the judgment of the team

## Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Elmhurst Elementary School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Portsmouth School District School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Portsmouth School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Elmhurst Elementary School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

## 2. PROFILE OF ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Elmhurst School, currently the largest of three elementary schools in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, was once a private Catholic girls' boarding school run by the Sisters of Sacred Heart. Most of the school was built in 1960. The town of Portsmouth purchased Elmhurst Academy in 1972. It opened as a Portsmouth public school in September 1973. In 1998 classroom space was increased as part of a school bond renovation plan. Two classrooms were added onto the second grade wing, and two classrooms were added onto the lower level. Some internal space was redesigned on the lower level to provide a room for occupational therapy and adult bathrooms. Presently 408 students attend this kindergarten through grade four school.

For the most part children who attend Elmhurst School come from two-parent households in the middle to upper-middle income brackets. Many come from two-working-parent households from the residential neighborhoods in the southeastern section of town. A number of children in the second grade classes come from an overflow at Melville School. The fourth grades are presently closed to any new students due to the limited maximum class size as set in the school contract.

There are four half-day kindergarten sessions. The four classes at each grade level each include a 1/2 and a 3/4-grade loop. There are two intensive resource levels, a Grades 1-2 program and a Grades 3-4 program. Children in each level are included in a regular setting and spend a portion of their day with a special educator in either a regular setting or a smaller setting. Other special education students are supported with in-class and pullout resource services.

Due to the co-curricular schedule, grade level teachers have common planning opportunities four days a week. These teachers use at least one of these times each week as common planning time. Due to additional needs of special education students, both special education and regular education staff have flexible schedules that include all personnel in supporting student needs throughout the school day.

Elmhurst has a strong parent volunteer program and a high parent participation rate.

The active EPTO (Elmhurst Parent Teacher Organization) supports many of the school's activities and programs including the Accelerated Reader, field trips and the purchase of classroom materials. There is a RFP process by which teachers can submit their proposals for funding. Parents are members of the school improvement team and participate in a variety of grade level initiatives.

### **Special Programs, initiatives, public recognitions:**

Elmhurst is a "2003 Regents Commended School."

Elmhurst provides students with looping options in 1/2 and 3/4 settings.

Elmhurst provides students with strong interdisciplinary connections between co-curriculars and classrooms.

Elmhurst offers a variety of community service programs. The current school wide project is "The Caring Connection- Earning School Supplies for Children in Iraq."

Elmhurst offers an Intergenerational Program in which representative children from different grades visit residents of Aquidneck Place, an assisted living center, on a monthly basis.

The Elmhurst librarian with parent volunteers conducted a photography research project: "Picturing the Glen – Then and Now."

At Elmhurst there are sound field systems (four classroom speakers and a microphone for the teacher) in the classrooms from kindergarten through the second grade. An initial grant award set up systems in the kindergartens and the two first grade classrooms. The parent group supported the purchase of systems for the remaining two first and second grade classrooms.

The Elmhurst librarian and art teacher received a grant from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Society for a research project, "Down on the Farm."

The aquarium located in the Elmhurst School lobby was purchased as part of grant award for BIOMES – study of marine life; new specimens are added monthly.

In 2002-2003 an Elmhurst speech language pathologist and a grade 1-2 intensive resource teacher collaboratively wrote a grant proposal and were awarded funds from the Portsmouth Public Education Foundation to start a newsletter written by students in the class.

In 2002-2003 an Elmhurst first grade teacher wrote a grant proposal and received funds from the Portsmouth Public Education Foundation for a backpack program for home/school connection.

An Elmhurst school counselor wrote a grant proposal and was awarded funds for the purchase of supplies and materials for the intergenerational program.

The Elmhurst reading specialist began developing a lending library of leveled texts that initially was made possible through a grant award from the North Family Trust and through Elmhurst Parent Teacher Organization.

Beginning this fall, Elmhurst third and fourth grade teachers decided to house multiple copies of their texts in a closet in third grade wing at the school, and they are now in process of leveling texts and straightening the shelves.

Elmhurst participates in the "Character Counts" program—a framework that teaches the six pillars of *trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring* and *citizenship*.

Each fall, Elmhurst teachers at all grade levels host curriculum evenings for parents to explain the standards, as well as to explain individual classroom routines and expectations.



### **3. PORTRAIT OF ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

Elmhurst Elementary School is nestled in a scenic hillside overlooking the Sakonnet River. A sparkling series of hallways and classrooms greets you, when you enter this vibrant learning community. This school provides a safe environment, where students are nurtured and achieve at high levels in spite of inconsistent leadership, budget cuts and the failed promises of the school district. Parents, staff, faculty and the school administrator are committed, involved and hardworking in their effort to enrich student learning.

Parents like this school. They are valued, involved and given a voice here. They volunteer in classrooms and provide resources to support activities and learning at the school.

Teachers work very hard and are dedicated to their students. Due to the lack of a defined curriculum and necessary materials, they have been forced to patch together instructional programs for their students. Professional development is superficial and lacks depth. A lack of direction or supervision in instruction and professional development, as well as the lack of consistency and communication throughout the school, creates inequities in the quality of student education here. In the classrooms, where exemplary teaching goes on, students are proud of their school and passionate about their work.

Students are courteous and respectful. They do well, but they could do even better with more rigorous, student-centered instruction.

The dedication of teachers, the involvement of parents and the readiness of students have nurtured the high performance of this school. The lack of standards-based curricula, sustained professional development and accountability for student performance and teaching practices will eventually erode this learning community. Clear district focus and town financial support are crucial for the continued success of Elmhurst students.

## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students at Elmhurst are courteous and respectful, both of their peers and the adults. They are happy to be at Elmhurst and are enthusiastic about their learning. The majority of students come to school ready to learn. They bring a wide variety of experiences and prerequisite skills necessary to become successful learners. However, many students are not engaged in their learning. Some students say that their work is too easy and that they already know how to do it. Students are involved in concrete learning opportunities, which require them to spend a disproportionate amount of time on non-authentic learning tasks. This impedes their right to a balanced education. Students say they do not know why they are doing the tasks they are doing; they do not know when they have finished their work or even if they have done a good job. They do not see the connection between the tasks and their overall learning. Nor do they demonstrate the ability to self evaluate or monitor their progress. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2003 Salt Survey report)*

The quality and quantity of student reading varies. Many students read fluently and expressively; however, many do not use reading strategies consistently, and some students in this group are not even aware of them. Most students demonstrate a literal understanding of what they read. Student responses, both oral and written, are predominately factual. This supports their exemplary performance on the Reading: Basic Understanding section of the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination. However, students often are not aware of their own metacognition, and they do not apply their thinking beyond this literal level. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary, classroom textbooks)*

Students do a great deal of writing. They write across subject areas. Some students write very well. Those who write well use their classroom environment to develop and improve their writing. Peer conferencing often provides these students feedback to guide their revision and editing. This gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their thinking processes and to learn how to improve the quality of their writing. Those who do not write well often write only to complete the assignment with little or no understanding of the purpose of the task. They do not know how to go back and revisit their work. This does not give them the opportunity to improve. Most student writing is not authentic. Students predominately write on teacher prompted topics and within prescribed structures. Therefore, there is little ownership of their writing. This limits students' ability to be creative, expressive and passionate about their writing. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary, 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

Students compute well in mathematics. They complete worksheets, play games and use manipulatives to reinforce their skills. They do not think or talk mathematically, draw conclusions, analyze data, predict or even see the reasonableness of their answers. Students practice problem solving strategies, but many do not independently choose a strategy that effectively solves the problem. The majority of students do not share or justify the process they have used to defend their solutions. This makes it difficult for them to take what they have learned and apply it to real life situations. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with school improvement team, students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summary, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, classroom textbooks)*

### **Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning**

- ◆ *Students perform well on the state assessments.*
- ◆ *Students come to school ready to learn.*
- ◆ *Students are capable of higher levels of achievement.*
- ◆ *Students are not clear about their progress.*
- ◆ *Students do not see a connection between their learning and their life outside of the classroom.*

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Elmhurst School teachers are dedicated professionals. A lack of direction and accountability frustrates and disenfranchises teachers. In spite of these deficiencies, they have attempted to patch together programs for their students. While commendable, this does not improve student learning. Teachers are not making the maximum use of their instruction time. While they have taken control of content, they have not taken advantage of the opportunities and resources that are available. They waste too much time on non-academic activities. They do not use their common planning time to collaborate and develop consistency between and among the grade levels. Teachers focus on their own classes, neglecting their responsibility for their school learning community as a whole. This does not create a collegial environment. Teacher assistants, resource teachers, school specialists and parent volunteers are not used in a way that would maximize student learning. *(following students, talking with students, staff and teachers, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom)*

There is a wide disparity among teaching practices at Elmhurst School. While we would not question the dedication and commitment of teachers, we do see some habits and attitudes that limit their effectiveness. Teachers feel comfortable teaching whatever and however they feel is most effective. This high level of autonomy has had a negative affect by creating an inconsistent practice between and among grades. Teachers express their concern about the lack of a consistent standards-based curriculum. While many individual teachers have attended various professional development workshops, there is no consistent implementation and follow-up. Most instruction is whole group and teacher directed, which primarily solicits literal responses from students. These practices are not conducive to individualization and differentiation of instruction, which are necessary to meet the varied needs of students. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school improvement team, students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2003 Salt Survey report)*

Teachers give students very little useful feedback to help them monitor and improve their work. Too many teachers assess student work to see if it has been completed, rather than to guide their students toward an increased understanding and improvement of their work. Check marks, smiley faces and stickers do not provide concrete feedback to students. Not enough teachers have taught students how to reflect on their work or how to take ownership for their learning. Not enough have given students sufficient feedback to help them improve their performance. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments)*

**Commendations for Elmhurst Elementary School**

Dedicated and committed teachers

Responsibility of teachers for classroom programs

**Recommendations for Elmhurst Elementary School**

Implement job embedded professional development for all staff.

Hold all your students to high expectations.

Implement differentiated instruction to ensure academic rigor.

Use professional resources to build the capacity of regular classroom teachers to accommodate the needs of all students.

Regularly use common planning time to improve student learning, and develop consistent teaching practices.

Review classroom schedules to maximize instructional time.

Provide consistent and meaningful feedback to students to improve their learning.

Use the training available through the East Bay Educational Collaborative.

**Recommendations for Portsmouth School Department:**

Use the system you have developed (Portsmouth School Professional Development Plan and Action Model) for professional development to support learning and teaching.

Provide the necessary resources and materials for teachers to implement a standards-based curricula.

## 6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Conclusions

Inconsistency is evident in all areas of the curriculum, instruction and program implementation. Programs are introduced and implemented within this school with superficial knowledge and limited ongoing support. Much professional development at this school is introductory, and only minimal follow up is provided. This encourages teachers to develop instructional models that do not allow for common language, common strategies or consistent instruction. This also results in fragmented teaching and learning and overall frustration for the entire school community. Teachers, students and school and district administrators, as well as parents, acknowledge the need for consistency in the curriculum, communication, leadership and accountability for learning and teaching. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, parents, meeting with school improvement team, students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2003 Salt Survey report)*

The curriculum for English Language Arts is based solely on the standards, as defined by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). How these are used is left to the discretion and interpretation of individual teachers. The implementation looks very different from classroom to classroom. This lack of consistency adversely affects the continuity of learning and teaching between and among the grades and allows for gaps in student learning. This failure to align instruction with the standards, assessments and the curriculum results in fragmented student learning. *(following students, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, ELA/Math Curriculum Standards, Portsmouth School Department Framework for Effective Literacy Instruction in Grades K-4)*

While there is a district curriculum for mathematics, there is no standards based mathematics program adopted by the district to support the curriculum. Teachers express a desire and a need for a standards based mathematics program and the accompanying professional development to support its implementation. Portsmouth District defines balanced literacy as its model for reading and Kid Writing and 6-Traits as its model for writing. There is no evidence that Elmhurst School has developed a comprehensive implementation plan to ensure application of all components of balanced literacy. *(following students, Portsmouth School Department Math Curriculum, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators)*

Because both curriculum and a continuous improvement process are lacking at the district and school levels, Elmhurst School has not created a framework of continuous improvement. The vagueness and lack of support and accountability systems within both the district and the school limit the effective learning and teaching that can take place. This encourages extreme autonomy that does not foster consistency or accountability. Furthermore, it erodes the learning community and leaves the staff frustrated, confused and feeling unsupported. *(talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices, observing classes, reviewing school improvement plan)*

While flexibility within an elementary school is critical, there has to be accountability for instructional time. Excessive and lengthy transition times, whole class bathroom breaks and snack times, lunch, recesses and the dismissal procedures all result in the loss of valuable instructional time. Common grade level planning time for teachers is provided in the class schedule. However, teachers are not using this time consistently, and their use of this time is not monitored. While some grade level teachers use this time to collaborate, others do not. This further limits the consistency, communication and collaboration, which negatively affect student learning. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, and staff, school and classroom schedules, reviewing district and school policies and practices, 2003 Salt Survey report)*

Parents are committed to Elmhurst and are a valuable resource in this school. Communications by the Elmhurst Parent Teacher Organization are: *The Elmtree News*, a school web page, and Home & School Connections. Individual classroom newsletters are some of the avenues of communication between home and school. Parents are concerned that the classroom communication varies among teachers. This leaves some parents feeling that they are less informed about their children's education than others. The technology that is available is inadequate and underutilized, both as a method of communication and as a learning tool. *(observing classes, meeting with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, Elmtree News, school web page, volunteer log, Portsmouth School Technology Plan 2001-04)*

### **Commendations for Elmhurst Elementary School**

Level of parent involvement and commitment

### **Recommendations for Elmhurst Elementary School**

Review your schedule to maximize instructional time.

Develop consistency in implementing balanced literacy.

Develop consistency in mathematics instruction.

Use common planning time for opportunities for job embedded professional development and to share expertise.

Follow the Portsmouth Professional Development Plan (2001).

Review the use of technology within the school.

### **Recommendations for Portsmouth School Department**

Align curriculum and assessments to the standards.

Develop a curriculum planning process and an instructional planning system.

Provide a standards-based mathematics program and all the support materials necessary to successfully implement it.

Revise the technology plan to support instruction and communication.

Provide the necessary financial support to implement these recommendations.

Work with the Portsmouth School Committee to support learning and teaching at Elmhurst School.

### **Recommendations for Portsmouth School Committee**

Work with Portsmouth School Department to support learning and teaching at Elmhurst School.



## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Elmhurst School is a high performing school. Teachers and staff should be proud of all they have accomplished. Your high state test assessment results, while impressive, have the potential to develop a false sense of security and lull the community into apathy. Without the support of the district and the community, it will be difficult to maintain your academic progress.

Talented teachers and supportive parents are a strong resource for your school. A defined curriculum, necessary support materials and professional development will provide a common language and continuity of instruction for students. Insist on effective, ongoing and embedded professional development to support your efforts.

As you begin your search for a new principal, think of your needs for consistency, communication and accountability. Hold yourselves and one another accountable for preparing your students to become productive citizens. Search out opportunities to communicate with one another. Become a collegial community.

This team feels that you care about your students and work very hard. With limited supports and programs, you have faced and dealt with many challenges. Speak up and advocate on behalf of yourselves, your students and your school.

## **ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT**

### **Elmhurst Elementary School**

February 6, 2004

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of two portions of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



**CATALPA LTD.**

Thomas A. Wilson, EdD

Catalpa Ltd.

March 1, 2004

## REPORT APPENDIX

### Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Elmhurst Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Elmhurst Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following nine students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
  - teachers*
  - school improvement team*
  - school and district administrators*
  - students*
  - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - district and school policies and practices*
  - records of professional development activities*
  - classroom assessments*
  - school improvement plan for Elmhurst Elementary School*
  - district strategic plan*
  - 2003 SALT Survey report*
  - classroom textbooks*
  - 2003 Information Works!*
  - 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
  - 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
  - School and District Report Cards*

*ELA/Math Curriculum Standards (Portsmouth School Department)*  
*Portsmouth School Technology Plan 2001-04*  
*Portsmouth School Department Math Curriculum*  
*Portsmouth School Professional Development Plan and Action Model*  
*Portsmouth School Department Framework for Effective Literacy Instruction in Grades K-4*  
*Portsmouth School Technology Plan, 2001-2004*  
*Portsmouth School Department Budget 2002-03*  
*Elmtree News*  
*school web page*  
*volunteer log*

### **State Assessment Results for Elmhurst Elementary School**

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

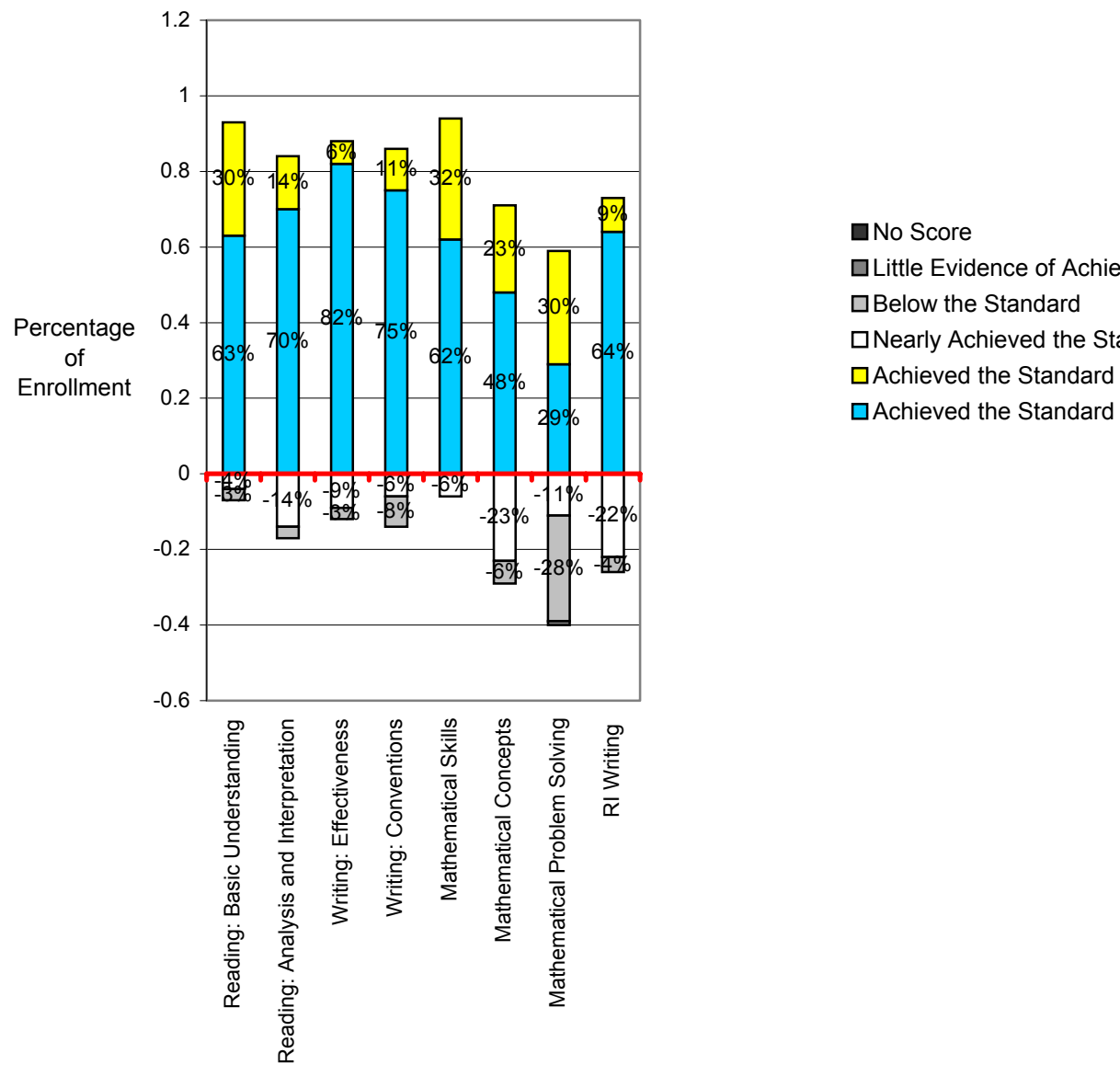
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

#### **RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

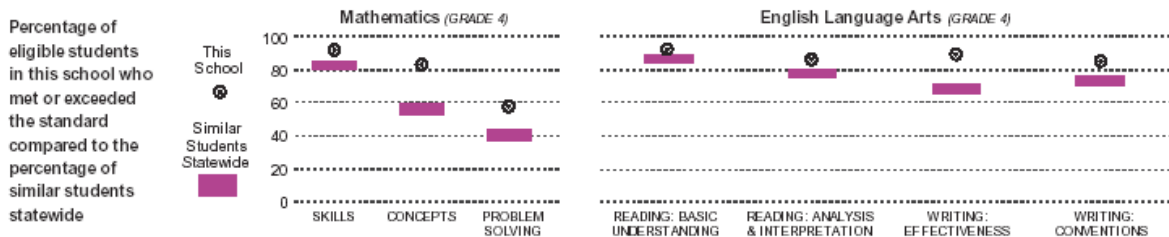
Table1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments



### RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN THE STATE

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to - a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

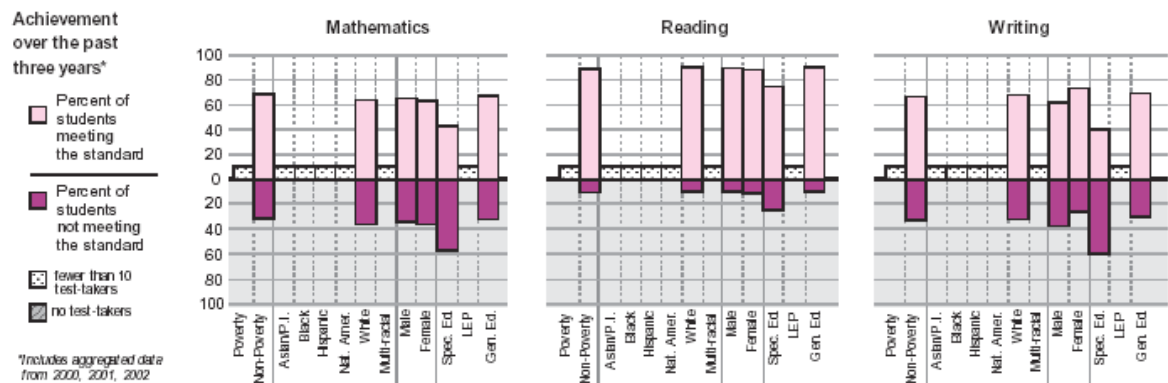
*Table 2. 2001-2002 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide*



### RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. The Department defines an important gap between different groups (an equity gap) to be a gap of 15% or more.

*Table 3. 2001-2002 Student Results across Subgroups*



SCHOOL REPORT CARD

Elmhurst Elementary School has been categorized as a high performing improving school on the basis of its assessment results from 2000 to 2003. The following is the school report card that shows the schools performance in relation to the 2004 annual measurable objectives. (AMO)

Table 4. 2003 School Report Card

Rhode Island  
School: Elmhurst School  
Rhode Island  
District: Portsmouth

School Report Card - 2003 - Accountability

Grade 4

Index Proficiency  
Score

Student Group	English Language Arts - Target Score: 76.1						Mathematics - Target Score: 61.7					
	2000-02	2001-03	Change	Target Met	District 01-03	State 01-03	2000-02	2001-03	Change	Target met	District 03	State 01-03
All Students	94.1	95.9	1.7	2	91.7	84.2	87.2	90.4	3.1	2	82.5	74.2
African-American	*	*	*	1	*	76.4	*	*	*	1	*	62.8
Asian	*	*	*	1	*	83.8	*	*	*	1	*	73.9
Hispanic	*	*	*	1	*	74.6	*	*	*	1	*	62.6
Native American	*	*	*	1	*	83.9	*	*	*	1	*	71.3
White	94.3	96.2	1.8	2	93	89	86.9	90.2	3.3	2	83.6	79.6
Students with Disabilities	*	*	*	1	78.9	68	*	*	*	1	66.3	62.6
Students with Limited English Proficiency				1		66.6				1		56.7
Economically Disadvantaged Students	*			1	85	76.9	*			1	70.9	65.1

\* fewer than 45 test takers.

Percent of Students Tested (2001-2003):

Attendance Rate: (2003)

	This School	This District	This State
ELA	100	99.5	98.7
Mathematics	100	99.5	99.1

This School	This District	The State
95.8	95.6	94.6

Targets Met/Missed:

Classification:

	Targets Met	Targets Missed
ELA	9	0
Mathematics	9	0

High Performing and Improving

Target Met Code:

- 0 - did not meet target
- 1 - met target because of minimum N
- 2 - 3 year AMO
- 3 - 3 year SH
- 4 - 1 year AMO
- 5 - 1 year SH

Information Works! data for Elmhurst Elementary School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.



**THE ELMHURST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Denise Dvorak, Co-Chair  
Reading Specialist, Parent

Jean Lehane, Co-Chair  
Parent

Mary Fran Bauchspies, Parent

JoAnn Black, VIS Coordinator

Sue Burghouwt, Parent

Nancy Doucet, Grade One/Two Looping Teacher

Particia Fay, Grade Four Teacher

Mary Foley, Principal

Ann Larson, Parent

Trish Maggiacomo, Co-President EPTO

Karen Moore, Grade Two Teacher  
Chairperson-Faculty Advisory Committee

Jane Pellechio, Parent

Gloria Schmidt, Librarian

Ruth Sears, Grade Three Teacher

Valerie Seveney, Grade One Teacher

Mikki Menning Spero, Co-President EPTO

Margaret Waugh, Grade Two Teacher

Kevin Weaver, Grade Three/Four Looping Teacher

Ruth Ziegler, School Secretary

**MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM**

Donna H. Reinalda  
Saltfellow

Susan L.Hatch  
Newport Public Schools  
Early Childhood Coordinator

Daniel McGregor  
North Kingstown Public Schools  
District School Improvement Coordinator

Brenda E. Ratcliff  
Clayville Elementary School  
Scituate Public Schools  
Principal

Pamela R. Alexander  
Aquidneck School  
Middletown Public Schools  
Multiage classroom teacher

Christina Rua  
Forest Avenue  
Middletown Public Schools  
K-4 Literacy Coach

Bruce J. Whitehouse  
Wilbur McMann  
Little Compton School Department  
K-8 General/Choral Music

Cheryl L. Palumbo  
Sowams School  
Barrington Public Schools  
Teacher Assistant

Linda N. Bruno  
Guiteras School  
Bristol-Warren Regional  
4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher

**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM**

INSERT HERE